



CAHS

The Connecticut Association for Human Services
110 Bartholomew Avenue · Suite 4030
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
www.cahs.org

Michael Rohde, President
James P. Horan, Executive Director
860.951.2212 x 235
860.951.6511 (fax)

Testimony before the Select Committee on Children

Raised Bill No. 5293 and 6282

Submitted by Sherry Linton, Early Care and Education Policy Analyst

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) would like to thank Representative Diana Urban and the members of the Committee for the opportunity to respond to H.B. 5293, An Act Extending the "Care 4 Kids" Program to Families with a parent who is actively seeking employment and H.B. 6282, An Act requiring an annual Results-Based Accountability (RBA) report card evaluating state policies and programs impacting children. **Both bills speak directly to the need for a more efficient system of administering child care and related services in Connecticut.**

H.B. 5293 reiterates components of the current Care 4 Kids regulations allowing for child care eligibility for the employed and those experiencing interruption in employment. This bill highlights the point that although the policies exist to guide the implementation of the program, the interpretation of the regulations by those determining eligibility is often not uniform. Inconsistencies in the delivery of the program, with on-going reports of interrupted eligibility based on changes and/or loss in employment, only serve to undermine the continuity of care and learning for children, and jeopardize the employability of families. This bill also reinforces the mandates passed by the legislature, in the Children in the Recession legislation, to ensure timely notice to families and child care providers in the event of significant changes to the program.

Last but certainly not least, ***the legislature increased the budget of the Care 4 Kids program to \$104M for FY1, from the initial \$95M, based on the demand for service and the realization that low-income families need assistance in accessing reliable child care in order to work.*** Unfortunately, this decision could be undermined through the creation of forced lapses in spending by the Department of Social Services limiting enrollment in the program. This precedence has been set by the Department, as was the case when the program was abruptly closed in May of 2009 with restrictions in eligibility that resulted in some families being bumped from the program when they experienced small increases in income. As a result, enrollment in the program plummeted, to the extent where the Department came close to violating federal guidelines on maintenance of effort spending to child care in order to retain child care stimulus funding. ***The funding budgeted by the legislature should be, "strictly and fully utilized for child care purposes that enable parents to work and children to thrive." There still exists an exasperating need for assistance in accessing reliable child care in order for families to work and/or seek employment.*** As such, we support the articulation in the bill to have, "The Department shall open and maintain enrollment for the child care subsidy program and shall administer such program within the budgetary resources available." The \$104M budgeted by the legislature for FY11 should be committed to the child care subsidy that CT residents depend on.

CAHS supports the overall intent of H.B. 5293 and H.B. 6282, spotlighting the need for policies and regulations to be enforced as practice, with the necessary checks and balances to ensure efficiency. With support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, CAHS is working diligently for increase in the RBA approach to service delivery. We are an organization that has been working for 100 years to combat poverty and create opportunities for children and families. The recommendations outlined are in full alignment with that mission, and we trust that the legislature will recognize that the recommendations outlined in this testimony are in alignment with the mission of the state.

For more information: Sherry Linton (860)-951-2212 ext. 233, slinton@cahs.org